

Message Text

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FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: NATO, NPG
SUBJECT: ALLIED ATTITUDES ON NEUTRON BOMB: ICELAND

REF: STATE 184569

1. ICELANDIC PRESS HAS NOT GIVEN MORE THAN SCATTERED ATTENTION TO NEUTRON BOMB ISSUE SINCE ANNOUNCEMENT OF PRESIDENTIAL DECISION TO CONTINUE ITS DEVELOPMENT. SOLE EXCEPTION HAS BEEN LEFT-WING THJODVILJINN, PEOPLES' ALLIANCE DAILY, WHICH, COINCIDENTALLY, TODAY RUNS LEAD EDITORIAL ATTACKING PRESIDENT FOR DECISION TO CONTINUE BOMB'S DEVELOPMENT. THIS GENERAL PUBLIC PASSIVENESS IS CONSISTENT WITH FACT THAT ICELANDERS, IN ABSENCE MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT OF THEIR OWN, DO NOT NORMALLY FOLLOW DEVELOPMENTS IN MILITARY TECHNOLOGY OR GRAND STRATEGY. (EVANS AND NOVAK COLUMN OF AUGUST 3, FOR EXAMPLE, ON ALLEGED U.S. DEFENSE STRATEGY CAUSED SCARCELY A RIPPLE HERE).

2. VIEW THEIR TRADITIONAL DETACHMENT FROM MAJOR POLITICAL-MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS, I BELIEVE NEWS OF EXISTENCE OF NEUTRON

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BOMB AND ITS IMPLICATIONS SURPRISED ICELANDERS, INCLUDING GOI (WHOSE OFFICIALS HAVE NOT VOLUNTEERED ANY COMMENTS ON SUBJECT TO US). NOW, HOWEVER, HAVING BEEN ALERTED TO BOMB, ICELANDERS WILL BE MORE THAN NORMALLY INTERESTED IN ANY PRESIDENTIAL DECISION RE DEPLOYMENT. PRINCIPAL REASON IS THAT BOMB IS UNPLEASANT REMINDER TO ICELANDERS OF HOW QUICKLY

THEIR TOTAL SOCIETY, CONSISTING OF SCARCELY 220,000 PEOPLE, HALF OF WHOM LIVE IN REYKJAVIK AREA, COULD BE EXTINGUISHED IN NUCLEAR AGE.

3. ICELANDERS ARE, NVERTHELESS, REALISTS. IF THEY PRIVATELY WISH BOMB HAD NOT BEEN DEVELOPED, AS I SUSPECT IS CASE, THEY ARE ALMOST CERTAINLY RELIEVED TO KNOW US ACQUIRED ITS TECHNOLOGY FIRST. GIVEN THEIR SUSPICIONS OF SOVIETS, MY GUESS IS THAT THEY HAVE NO DOUBT SOVIETS WOULD DEPLOY WEAPON IF THEY HAD IT. FINALLY, RECENT PUBLICITY, INCLUDING TWO-PART TV PROGRAM, GIVEN HERE TO WARSAW PACT NUMERICAL SUPERIORITY OVER NATO CONVENTIONAL FORCES COULD HELP ICELANDERS TO ACCEPT ANY DEPLOYMENT DECISION AS MILITARILY NECESSARY.

4. THUS, MY OVER-ALL CONCLUSION IS THAT IF DECISION WERE MADE TO DEPLOY BOMB, ICELANDERS GENERALLY AND PRESENT GOVERNMENT WOULD ACCEPT IT AND HOPE FOR THE BEST. VOCAL LEFTIST PRESS AND PEOPLES' ALLIANCE IN PARLIAMENT, HOWEVER, WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY ATTACK ANY SUCH DECISION VIGOROUSLY AND RENEW DEMAND FOR ICELAND'S WITHDRAWAL FROM NATO AND FOR REMOVAL OF ICELAND DEFENSE FORCE. GOI MIGHT ALSO BE PRESSED HARD BY SOME OF ITS OWN SUPPORTERS AS WELL AS BY LEFTIST OPPOSITION FOR ASSURANCES THAT BOMB WILL NOT
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BE DEPLOYED AT KEFLAVIK NATO BASE. GIVEN HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF ICELAND'S MEMBERSHIP IN NATO AND COUNTRY'S SIZE, I BELIEVE GOI, INCLUDING PRESENT FRIENDLY CABINET, WOULD NOT RPT NOT WANT TO BE ASKED TO AGREE TO WEAPON'S DEPLOYMENT ICELAND. RE DEPLOYMENT IN EUROPE, GOI WOULD REGARD THIS AS MATTER FOR EACH OF ITS NATO ALLIES TO DECIDE FOR ITSELF.

5. IF DECISION WERE MADE NOT TO DEPLOY BOMB, I BELIEVE IT WOULD BE GREETED BY MOST ICELANDERS, AND PROBABLY BY GOI, WITH RELIEF. SOME WOULD ALSO REGARD DECISION AS CONTRIBUTION TO EASING OF WHAT ICELANDERS PERCEIVE AS INCREASED TENSIONS BETWEEN U.S. AND SOVIET UNION.

6. OUR FRIENDS IN GOI AND IN ICELANDIC MEDIA, OF COURSE, WOULD NEED ALL THE HELP THEY COULD GET TO EXPLAIN WHY ANY DEPLOYMENT DECISION WOULD DIMINISH RATHER THAN INCREASE RISK OF SUPERPOWER NUCLEAR CONFRONTATION. ANY EFFORTS WE MAKE IN THIS ALL-IMPORTANT INFORMATIONAL AREA WOULD PAY OFF HERE.
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